

DIOCESE
of NEW ULM

Office of Bishop

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JUN 10 2003

FCC - MAILROOM

Confirmed May 28, 2003

SUNSHINE PERIOD

Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
Office of the Secretary
445 12th Street SW
Room TW-204B
Washington, DC 20554

JUN 10 2003
Distribution Center

Re: Informal Comments, MB Dkt. No. 02-277; MM Dkt. No. 01-235;
MM Dkt. No. 01-317; MM Dkt. No. 00-244

Dear Ms. Secretary,

As Bishop of the Diocese of New Ulm, I write with serious concern in regard to the above-referenced Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, released September 23, 2002.

The Diocese has long been concerned about the erosion of local news and public affairs programming caused by the FCC's and Congress' weakening of broadcast ownership limits, and the FCC's elimination of broadcast rules which formerly had permitted the FCC and the community to monitor broadcasters to help ensure that broadcasters served their community of license with programs which meet community needs and interests. In particular, in this Diocese locally produced and locally directed religious programming, although wanted by the community, has all but disappeared, replaced by syndicated talk shows and infomercials.

We urge the FCC to refrain from making changes in the current rules which (a) prohibit cross-ownership of broadcast stations and newspapers in the same community, (b) limit the number of television and radio stations a single entity may own in a single community, (c) set a national ownership cap for television stations at an already overly generous 35% of households, and (d) prohibit common ownership of major television networks. Cable television already is dominated by the same companies that dominate television and satellite systems and the programming on those systems, and those same companies are moving into providing Internet access. Neither cable nor the Internet (whether offered through cable or telephone companies) offer meaningful alternatives to the already scarce supply of truly local news and local public affairs programs on over-the-air television and radio.

Respectfully submitted,



The Most Reverend John C. Nienstedt
Bishop of New Ulm

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